



***Forest Service**
Cherokee National Forest
Watauga Ranger District
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News Release



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High Water at National Forest Recreation Facilities

Cherokee National Forest

UNICOI, TENN, April 26, 2017 – U.S. Forest Service officials at the Cherokee National Forest have temporarily closed the lower road and parking area at Watauga Point Day Use Area on Watauga Lake at Highway 321 near Hampton, TN. Rising lake levels have impacted several national forest recreation sites in the area.

National forest sites impacted by high water at Watauga Lake:

- **Rat Branch Boat Launch** – boat dock underwater and unusable (be aware of underwater hazards and use caution if launching from the parking lot).
- **Rat Branch Fishing Pier** - closed.
- **Little Milligan Boat Launch**- boat dock underwater and unusable (be aware of underwater hazards and use caution if launching from the parking lot)
- **Sink Mountain Boat Launch**- boat dock underwater and unusable (be aware of underwater hazards and use caution if launching from the parking lot)

National forest sites impacted by high water at South Holston Lake:

- **Little Oak Campground Boat Launch** - higher than normal water level (exercise caution when using ramp)

Watauga District Ranger Keith Kelley said, “The safety of our visitors is our first concern. We will reopen any closed sites once the area is safe and useable again”.

With the recent heavy rains, visitors to the national forest are encouraged to use caution while outdoors. Saturated soils can cause instability for trees along trails and

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forest roads, blocking passage. Recreating along streams or rivers can be a risk if there are thunderstorms in the area. When visiting remote areas, be alert for heavy rains and sudden changes in the weather, especially overnight. Water can rise rapidly in mountainous areas. Always monitor weather forecasts prior to going to and while in back country areas. It may be best to postpone your visit until the weather improves.

Please contact the Watauga Ranger Station for additional information at (423) 735-1500. Visit the website for more information on outdoor safety and recreation at:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/cherokee/>.

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